

POEMS
BY
MURIEL RICE



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TO MY MOTHER



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BEFORE THE FALL

[*Eve Speaks*]

I KNEW the doubt before the serpent came,
Only it never seemed a doubt before.
I often used to wonder, not in fear,
But only for the joy of wondering:—
What if we ate the fruit, and what would come?
And why had He forbidden us to eat?
Why did He ever give the fruit at all,
Not wanting us to eat it? But all seemed
So glad and right before the serpent came.
Yet when the serpent spoke those thoughts of mine,
Somehow they were so terrible and strange
That I was glad that Adam was away.

And when I saw him coming from afar
I ran to him and told him other things.
He laughed, and wound my hair about his hand,
And kissed me. I was sure I could not tell:
He turned to leave me and I told him all.

BEFORE THE FALL

He seemed so far from me before I spoke,
But after I had spoken, farther still.
He took the side against me with his God.
God was enough to be against me then.
I wanted Adam, all of him, with me.
I would not take his kiss without his love;
I would not let him hold me any more;
I ran away into the woods alone
And wept, because he would not follow me.

Had but an angel opened wide the gate
That night, and let me forth into the world,—
The rocky world with grass between the rocks,
Long withered grass, a-tugging in the wind;—
I would have beat my head against the rocks,
And caught the withered grasses in my hand,
And tossed my freezing body in the wind.
I could have loved the cold, strange world so much;
For it had been my Adam and my God
That night when they had left me all alone.

BEFORE THE FALL

I never was a woman till that night.
Being a woman, I had need of earth.
What should I do with Eden any more,
Where everything was happy but myself?
The breezes would not touch me where I lay;
Even the flowers withered in my hand,—
They never withered in my hand before.
The great doubt lay beside me in the night,
The great doubt always whispered in mine ears:
Doubt is so dreadful when one is alone.

Then spoke the serpent hanging through the leaves,
"Be not afraid. He cannot hurt you more.
You shall be stronger to abide His wrath
When you have eaten of the golden fruit."
I answered, "Let me be. I was content
Before you came. I would be glad again.
The garden is not lovely any more."
Then spoke the serpent, dropping to my side,
"Be happy, for the doubt has made you great.

BEFORE THE FALL

Be not content to linger in this place,
Where angels grow enweared in an hour.
You too shall wander through undreamed-of lands
When you have eaten of the golden fruit."

Then I arose in fear and took my way
Quickly along the hot and heavy grass
To where the beasts lay sleeping side by side,
Each with his mate; so quietly they breathed.
I stood a while and watched them where they lay,
And envied them that God would let them rest.
My Adam lay a little distance off,
All white and quiet underneath the stars.
I hoped that he would wake, yet had no wish
To wake him, when I knelt beside him there.
I wanted so to hold his hand again.
Then all at once he looked into my face.
I saw my doubt was shining in his eyes;
And then I knew that we must eat, and know.

PYGMALION AND GALATEA

NOW the great hour, the hour of all my life,
Is come. I dare not look at thy white form,
My Galatea, dare not touch thy hand,
In this new fear. And wilt thou, wakening,
Know how my soul like to a mother bore thee,
With more than mother anguish, till thy form,
Perfect and peerless, wakened in my breast
A more than mother love? Hast thou forgot
The glory of thy body out of stone
Revealed,—fresh sunlight, sea winds on thee blowing,—
And how the chisel trembled in my hand,
Carving thy face,—till somehow from the stone
Woman, thy need of beauty like a prayer
Smote me? Then ceased the trembling all at once.
Oh canst thou look at me and still forget!
The sunlight falls remembering, and again
The breezes blow over the golden world.

PYGMALION AND GALATEA

Slowly the little minute spreads away
And time stands still about thee. O my love!
'Tis so much more for thy sake than for mine
That I would have thee live. Yea, for I think
How beautiful the living world would wake
To one so beautiful. Then, in my time,
Gently I'll teach thee love,—the interpreter
Of every nature, drawing good or ill
Visible from the hidden depths of us.
We'll love each other simply, with no shame,
As the first man and woman in the world
Loved one another. Such rare love be ours;
As natural as breathing, or the reach
Of hands up into sunlight, sweet as youth,
A sense of all religion and deep joy.
Yet lest the woman nature find thee out,
Despite my watchfulness, to teach thy heart
The bitterness, the somewhat childish woe
Of women helpless with imagined wrongs,

PYGMALION AND GALATEA

Always I'll let thee hurt me when thou wilt,
So that thy nature, pacified with power,
May wound itself no further. I have loved
Often, and love has taught me many things.

What color will thy hair be, O my sweet,
What color? And what color thy still eyes?
Canst thou be lovelier in the living hues
Than now? The fancy cannot look so far.
Thou seemest now almost too fair to live.
And will that grace adorn thee afterward
When thou hast power to move thyself and choose
Thy postures? Ah begin, that I may know!
Begin, that Nature may draw back amazed
At what a man can do! Enviously
She watches. And we'll mock at her together,—
We'll mock at her together, thou and I.
Ah no, not thou! The mockery would mar
Thy gentler nature. Thou art but a child,
Though verging on the woman, sweet from both.

PYGMALION AND GALATEA

Oh, I will laugh aloud and praise the gods,
Looking on thee in ecstasy of power,
Telling myself I made thee, I, Pygmalion,
Unaided! Who could aid me at that task?
One can but pity Nature, foolish Nature,
That has not made a woman like to thee,
Nor could, in the great leisure of all time.

All time! . . . There is a terror in the words.
So men long buried feel the desolate wind
Sweep over them at midnight; and my heart
Shivers, as dead things shiver, things long dead.
Ah gods, what have I done! A little while
And she shall be a woman,—like a woman
To live, and like a woman shall she die.
Have I been mad, daring to bid thee live,
Daring to draw thee from the unmeasured years
To grace the little circuit of my life?
Thou that so utterly art theirs, not mine,—
Mine only that I made thee, theirs in all

PYGMALION AND GALATEA

Purpose and need. My strength was given for that.
Aye, for what else? My other works are naught.
I have fulfilled the gods in making thee.
Are the gods watching over me, remembering
What once I was? They'll come to me no more.
Ah thou, my child, whose eyes were to have seen
Ages unfold on ages, and new ages
Dawn, and new ages after them brought forth,—
Hadst thou but lived to have shown weak men the gods,
Uplifting them as thou hast lifted me,
Making them gladder, nobler, every way
Fitter for life, forever and forever!—
Thou shalt die, Galatea, dost thou hear?
Turn into dust, be nothing any more.
I am a man and I have lived in vain.

Slowly the sense of life breathes over thee,
As if my words, spoken to one alive,
Might be heard, dimly. It is very strange
Watching thee so. Hast thou a sense of the world,

PYGMALION AND GALATEA

A feeling of warm light and things outside?
Art thou alive indeed? It seems as even
The blood makes music through thee, the new blood.
Out of this peace I comprehend the gods
Suddenly, all at once, and they are glad.
I cannot understand, only 'tis so.
Thou standest in the rosy dawn of life.
Thine eyes are open. Thou hast looked on me
Strangely. So on its mother looks the babe,—
The first far look, as, lingering, the spirit
Draws back from other worlds into the eyes.
Thou breathest wonderfully; no other woman
Ever breathed so. My heart in awe of thee
Stands still. Now could I hold thee to my breast,
Nor know thee there by any quickening beat,
Only thy warmth against me, casual.

I have loved other women in my time,
Rightly and wrongly, as men love; to thee
I am the father warding back the lover.

PYGMALION AND GALATEA

I will not hurt thee, maiden, with my love.
My hand can be but tender touching thine.
I'll hold thee gentlest to me, when the blood
Seems burning out my life. I'll kiss thy brow
When I am mad with longing for thy lips.
Yea, and I hold the passion from my gaze
Now the great moment comes, so that thine eyes
May innocently look up into mine.
I would not have thee start from me in fear,
Nor blush in thine awakening. That my love
Should ever make thee blush or start away!
Oh now thou lookest wakened on this world:
Thou seest me now. Give me thy hand a while;
So when life's strangeness, like a crested wave,
Breaks on thee all at once, there's still my hand,
Something to hold to. Lean upon me, love,
Untrembling. O thou white and sacred thing,
Come to the sanctuary of mine arms.
Thy nearness kills me, yet sustains me too.
I cannot loose thee from me. Leave thy head

PYGMALION AND GALATEA

So, on my shoulder. Look not in mine eyes.
Oh for the power to smile stroking thy hair!
My strength goes from me. Help me, an thou canst.
Move, strive to speak, in some way wrench my thoughts
From the terror of thee.—Nothing aids me now
And she has waited with me all this while.
O Aphrodite, she is not afraid!

THE DEVOTEE

THEY tell us how the shattered statues lie
In the great church, with none to worship them.
They say the Gods are fallen from their place;
New Gods come, and the people throng to them.

I walked the lonely temple in the night.
Lo! in the chapel cell a woman lay;
Both arms relaxed upon the altar stair,
Her dark head bent to the cold pavement stone.

There, flung at helpless length upon the floor,
Prostrate below the vacant altar seat,
She lay in stillness; and a moonbeam came
To the pale robes and kindled in her hair.

They tell us how the shattered statues lie
In the great church, with none to worship them.
They say the Gods are fallen from their place;
New Gods come, and the people throng to them.

THE VICTORY

I SAW him in the market place.
I met his glance with scornful stare.
I gazed untroubled in his face
With all the pleasure of despair.

He scarcely seemed to understand,
For I had been so bowed before.
He came to me and sought my hand
And whispered sweetly as of yore.

That moment all the shame of years,
The expiation and the woe,
The prayers that gushed from me like tears,
Rose to my lips and bade him go.

My child was restless in the night.
I bent to stroke his pretty head,
And cried aloud in my delight
So Fate might hear,—“Thy father’s dead.”

THE ROYAL MARRIAGE

AYE, trick her up in pearly sheen
And place a diadem on her head
That all the land may call her queen.

And by the virgins be she seen—
The wanton whom the king has wed—
Aye, trick her up in pearly sheen.

And on the monarch let her lean,
And let the festival be sped
That all the land may call her queen.

And one that might have come between
The second marriage, he is dead.
Aye, trick her up in pearly sheen.

She passed triumphantly serene.
I felt the nation's soul had fled
That all the land might call her queen.

THE ROYAL MARRIAGE

No cheers the bridal pair could glean;
The hushed crowd marked each palfrey's tread.
Aye, trick her up in pearly sheen
That all the land may call her queen.

CLYTIE

[Suggested by a painting by Lord Leighton]

IS there no other way to him than this?
He will not heed thy prayers, he cannot see
Thy kneeling form, bent backward in the bliss
Of raptured yearning, both arms strained apart
To clasp him close if he should come to thee
Where now his light lies, burning on thy heart.

Yet must the utter need of all the earth
Subdue thy little longing. Should he go,
How sad the unillumined tides would flow;
And the forests mute and dim
With their blossoms dead at birth
From their ruin cry to him;
And the lone birds along the night wind roam
Like souls in Hades, moaning for their home.

Seek him in the things he knew;
Blossoms brimming with his love,

CLYTIE

Branches glorified above
Rainbows in the dew.
So will thy love assume a gentler strain;
And thou shalt take his hand in all he wrought,
And thou shalt come more close to him in thought
With each forgotten pain.

Think how all the glad birds sing
As his steeds lift into sight,
And the glad waves upward fling
Golden through the light.
Then the white-robed maidens pass
With his glory in their eyes,
And the waters from the grass
Turn to sunbeams as they rise,
Glimmer with the skies.
Why wilt thou not be happy with the rest?
The whole world loves his sway.
Yet Love forgoes her uses in thy breast,
Wearing thy youth away.

CLYTIE

Hadst thou a thought that he would come to thee,
How couldst thou dare
To concentrate thy life on that one prayer?
Think to lift thine eyes and see
At thy side
The God thy very love had deified,
The God that thrilled thee through unmeasured space,
Standing beside thee, gazing in thy face!
How strange his voice would sound upon thy soul
Athwart the reeling incoherent sense
Like undistinguished voices from afar.
How, if he drew thee to him, thy control
Would fail in one intense
Heart-burst of glory. So a star
Grows brighter as it falls:
One last wild gleam upon the mountain walls,
And dies on the immense.

THE AFTERWARD

IT is the afterward, the afterward,
That lasts through all things and is stern and cold.
The moment understands the moment's need;
The moment can forgive the moment's wrong;
The moment sees the right engulf the wrong:
It is the afterward, the afterward,
That calls back custom to chastise the soul.
It is the afterward that hurts us so,
Because it is too late to understand.

WHAT IS THY WILL?

WHAT is thy will, now thou hast led me here
To this lone woodland, comfortless and drear?
Lo, I have left the living world for thee!
What is thy will? What wilt thou do with me?
Hast thou no solace now, no word of cheer?

There is no comfort in the falling tear;
God laughs along my prayers—yet thou art near,
Thou that art stronger than eternity!
What is thy will?

I feel thee wicked sometimes, and I fear
That thou hast touched my soul and left it sere.
My heart is heavy with mortality.
Oh thou hast won a goodly mastery!
Pause we a little, for the angels hear.
What is thy will?

FEAR AND TRUST

I FEARED you to the limits of myself,
And that is why I trust you. Do you think,
When I have laid my soul within your hands
And bowed so low that even mighty God
Could scarcely bend me lower, that your word
Can fright me now? You have not strength to harm
Even the lowest reaches of my hair
With eyes or lips or fingers. . . .

RECOGNITION

COULD I mistrust you as I did before
And think you never showed your soul to me;
Only some beauty for the sense to see,
Some trick of knowledge from your ready lore,
To flatter me a little, nothing more;
And that I served amusement for awhile,
Occasion for the old indulgent smile,
Another heart-beat added to your store.

Could I think this and then remember you,
A quiet would arise to plead your cause,
Beautiful thoughts enwrap me like a glow;
Soothing the mind, perplexed with false and true,
Stilling the pulse a little, then a pause
And I would look into your face and know.

INTIMATIONS

THOU art not like those beauties that the eye
Stares on unconscious; rather what we feel,—
Beauty that makes the universe more real:
The warm red sunlight, ere it leaves the sky,
Falling upon us; sea-birds' drowsy cry,
Circling the void; a phosphorescent keel—
Golden at midnight; all the sweet appeal
Of swaying buds; a splendid butterfly.

In the white clover. Beauties that make start
The happy pulse, remind the soul of thee.
Although no thought remembers that thou art,
Still in their presence thou dost come to me:
Sweet as that utter quiet of the heart
That looks undaunted at eternity.

PREMONITIONS

AH love, I will so need you when you go ;
And I am very quiet at your side,—
But I will so much need you when you go.

I feel the minutes passing sure and slow,
And strive to hold them longer, for I know
That I will so much need you when you go.

I play awhile with words, but ever slow
Athwart my soul the troubled murmurs flow
That I will so much need you when you go.

Ah love, I will so need you when you go ;
And I am very quiet at your side,—
But I will so much need you when you go.

THE LAST GIFTS

LOOK, I will bring you all that you command,
My crown, my robes, the jewels that I wear ;
So that you come and take them in your hand,
I could not fear, although my soul were there.

But you have sent your servants down of late
To bear away the presents that I bring.
I waited like a beggar at the gate
And wept, for I had given everything.

And though I search my heart for something more
To please you, it must always be the same ;
The presence of the servant at the door
And a strange sense of helplessness and shame.

CONTRASTS

WHEN I remember how I bore the height,
The rush of wings athwart the morning sky,
My spirit lifts anew into the light:
Belovèd God, can I have been so high!

Then I remember all the steep abyss,
The sinking and the terror and the woe,
Hurled moaning from the dreadful precipice:
Belovèd God, can I have been so low!

I CALLED YOU OFTEN WHEN THERE
WAS NO NEED

I CALLED you often when there was no need,
Only to speak to you and hear your name;
And it has grown so very much the same,—
My voice in calling,—you no longer heed.

THE CHOSEN ONE

COULD I but once come close to God
As all the time you rest,
Rise from the sufferings of prayer
To lie upon His breast,
I would not crave so oft your voice
Where listening I can hear
God speaking too, till I rejoice
I sought you in my fear.

For He has told you many things
None else have ever known,
And many are the earthly stains
Concealed from you alone.
He laid His heaven in your eyes
And sent you forth to bless
Those souls that never see the skies
But walk in emptiness.

LOVE'S PASSING

OUR love has passed so quietly away,
Scarcely it seems that it is past recall;
And yet I dimly feel that this is all,
So dimly, yet so surely. Can spring stay
Without one latest blossom? Can the day
Last through the twilight's intermingled fall?
Our love has passed so quietly away
Scarcely it seems that it is past recall.

There was no press and anguish of a fray,
But heaven left us in an interval;—
And now we could not hear each other call;
I do not feel your presence when I pray,—
Our love has passed so quietly away.

THE END

AS one who, standing in a field of grain,
Cares not at all whatever side it sway,
So at the tired close of the long day,
I cannot care, even to see again
Thy face; and not the quickening of a pain,
No happy grief for hours passed away,
Unites me to those wistful thoughts that play
And die upon the distance like a strain.

I keep the show of sadness,—that is all,—
Start into tears that have no care to fall,
Catch tight my hands and laugh to set them free;
And 'tis not for thy sake I care, or mine,
But only that a thing so all divine,—
So exquisite a thing,—should cease to be.

THE DEEPER TRUST

I *CANNOT think your beauty passed away;
Beauty like yours could never fade so soon.
'Tis but a rude, unlovely part you play.*

Played for great reason, so I tell my heart,
Or for no reason, as the thing may be.
And there's an image that I keep apart,
Soft-lit with memory:—

The sense of what you were; the path I trod,
Bright with your presence; all the good I knew;
A purity past worlds,—too like to God
Ever to prove untrue.

You cannot hurt that image any more.
Tear it away and dash it into dust,—
My heart beats on as tranquil as before
In its unshattered trust.

*I cannot think your beauty passed away,
Beauty like yours could never fade so soon.
'Tis but a rude, unlovely part you play.*

ESSENTIALS

PULL off the ivy, scrape the soil away,
And cleanse the antique stains.

Then free the statue from her load of clay;
The sculptured bronze remains.

Pull friendship's lightly clinging bloom away,
And grieve not that it wanes.

These things may bud and wither in a day:—
The living God remains.

DEVOTION

I LAY the jewel at my lady's feet.
What though she spurn it from her? It is well.
Still has she touched the jewel with her feet.

I lay the jewel by my lady's hand.
What though she cast it from her? It is well.
Still has she pressed the jewel with her hand.

I lay the jewel on my lady's heart.
What though she toss it from her? It is well.
Still has she felt the jewel with her heart.

LOVE, MY LOVE

I DO not long for your lifted eyes,
Love, my love,
The gleaming arms that about me rise
And the hush of a kiss new born;
But I miss the sweet of the early skies,
Love, my love,
I miss the sweet of the early skies
And the wistful hope of morn.

I do not long for your laughing grace,
Love, my love,
The curls tossed back from averted face
And the trust of a hand in mine;
But I miss the throb of the golden space,
Love, my love,
I miss the throb of the golden space
And the dreaming noon divine.

LOVE, MY LOVE

I do not long for the tears that stun,
Love, my love,
The little griefs that have made us one
And your slow words' drop and fall;
But I miss the pang of the dying sun,
Love, my love,
I miss the pang of the dying sun
And his stately funeral.

CONTRADICTION

BECAUSE you know me, dear, so well,
Yea, better than I dare to tell,
The thought comes sometimes to appal
That you must know me least of all.

FRIENDSHIP

I GAVE thee my soul to mend,
My soul that was spent with care.
Believing thou wert my friend,
I gave thee my soul to mend.
'Tis finished. The Gods forbend!
Thy likeness lies printed there.
I gave thee my soul to mend,
My soul that was spent with care.

AVERSION

FREELY I grant the right to speak with me,
The right to gaze upon me at your will,
The thing men dare call "friendship";—courtesy
Is a light task and pleasant to fulfil:
Save when the sea's impatience of the shore
Yearns thro' your trancèd eyes, demanding more.

And when I think that you desire the right
Even to touch me with your finger tip,
To lean beside me in the failing light,
To press the shrinking forehead with your lip,—
Then above worlds I prize my maiden state
And the frail liking sickens into hate.

IT HURT ME THAT THE WORLD SHOULD
PRAISE YOU SO

IT hurt me that the world should praise you so,
Putting your noble nature to the test.
I only saw you, spoke no word, and lo,
You looked, and I had praised you with the rest.

“NOVEMBER IS AS FAIR AS MAY”

GOD, I am beautiful to-night;
Yet grieve my beauty cannot stay
To glorify the human sight.

So many lovely ladies bright
Have lived and smiled and passed away.
God, I am beautiful to-night.

Yet something whispers as I write,
November is as fair as May
To glorify the human sight.

And I have felt that He is right
Who gives and takes in endless play.
God, I am beautiful to-night.

Yea, at the coming of the blight,
Some wistful memory will sway
To glorify the human sight.

“NOVEMBER IS AS FAIR AS MAY”

And though I sink adown the light,
It is from thankfulness I pray:
God, I am beautiful to-night
To glorify the human sight.

THE FINGERS OF THE HOURS

THE fingers of the hours yearn apart
To catch existence up ; and all we have,
All that we have, and more than all we know,
Drops light into those little hands that close
Never to open after. Oh they reach
Across the soul as piteous as tears ;
Like beggars' hands they reach and crave for food.

SUMMER INDOLENCE

LARGE summer, like a sphinx, loometh above
Our trivial tasks,—her wide unclosing eyes
Gazing afar, divine with idleness.
The little fretful things we ought to do
Hang like dead blossoms from her crouching claws,
Too little worth even to cast away.

THOUGHTS

I AM as weary as a crested wave
Tossing through time upon a restless sea.
Mariners say endurance makes us brave;
It is not that, but only hope with me,—
Hope gazing listless at eternity;
And all along a weariness of prayer
That still unanswered frets incessantly,—
Frets past the open portals of despair
Through which we gaze, distraught, fearing to enter there.

Perfect despair is perfect peace at last,
Large perfect peace with restful tearless eyes;
No goading pain like the uneasy past;
For in the rayless softness of her skies,
Pregnant with calm, a younger heaven lies.
Nor fear, nor hope, nor life's uneven gloom
Abide; only a lethargy where flies
The frightened soul released from sorrow's womb.
What though her state she hold in the unbreathing tomb?

THOUGHTS

Strength is but weakness in this life of ours.
Strength is but weakness; nor comes power to say
“I am,” and feel, and know it. Falsehood lowers,—
Falsehood and fear,—to tear our wills away.
It recks not if the hair be bright or grey
So peace comes,—peace of waking, not of death,
For death treads after, suffer as we may.
Now what we crave is joy of life and breath,
Free thus to bow, and list what the wise spirit saith.

GIVE ME THE LIGHT

GIVE me the light; I cannot wait for day;
But through the heavy dark must grope my way.
The stars are dim; the moon lies in a cloud,
Close draped about her like a silver shroud.
On to the peak! for here I cannot stay.

The white uncertain snow about me lay.
I mounted, and it burst aloft like spray.
The avalanche is nigh with roarings loud!
Give me the light.

Look, on yon peak the northern fires play,
And far across the blackened vales they sway.
My hands are cold and all my strength is bowed;
Scarce can I on, to reach as I have vowed,
Yon scornful summit: yet a space I pray,—
Give me the light.

MEDITATION

SORROW of soul untouched with grief of earth;
Sorrow of earth unlighted with a soul;
Trust that is more than all religion is;
Religion hideously devoid of trust,
Groping in creeds, apart from Nature's God,—
Griefs of all times commingled into one,
Of wrong, wrong, and living suffering!
Why were we born from peace to sorrows here?
Why must we go even when life is sweet?
The cynic cry of all the ages past
Rings in mine ears; I cannot make reply.
But sometimes comes a joy along my being,
Transcending all the rhythm of the pulse;
And in my mind I have a well of light
Sweeter than all the heavenliness of tears;
A darkness that is brighter than the sun,
A pain whose comfort is the infinite,
And round me, sleeping, lie the arms of hope.

THE BROKEN HARP

THE harp is shattered at my feet
And the gold chords shine out in pain.
The silence lingers like a strain,
A strain that is nor sad nor sweet,
Only a low uncaring beat,
A pulseless impotent refrain—
The harp is shattered at my feet
And the gold chords shine out in pain.

And I am powerless to greet
Love from her tremulous domain,
Or sorrow with her pallid chain
Of tears, or joy alert and fleet:—
The harp is shattered at my feet.

LULLABY

LOW, low, the waves are lapping on the beach,
Each star is shining in the distant sky,
The breezes breathe upon me, soft with sleep,
And lightly soars the drowsy dragon-fly.

Low, low, the branches mingle with the black,
The pale night blossoms glimmer in the dew,
The far off ships murmur across the stream,
And fragrance floats the spacious woodland through.

A mist falls gently round the closing eye,
The world is growing silent in repose,
Dreams, visions, unrealities draw nigh,
And musical the gliding river flows.

CROCUSES

I HOLD them cool within my hand,
And a faint perfume springs
About them, as their bells expand,—
The living golden things.

A little child that scarce has heard
The voice of earth and air,—
Yea, though it could not name the word,
Would know that they are fair.

And though I place them in the shade,
They play upon the sight
Like sunbeams in a happy glade;
And oh, they look like light!

A WINTER CALM

THERE is a wild, wild light along the west ;
The vapors flare as in a lurid day ;
The winds blow free ; the storm has calmed away
And heavy lies the snow on the numb breast
Of the dead earth. Lo, like a bride she's dressed,
Married to winter. Clear reflections play
O'er pearly mounds, and shaking shadows sway
Like fitful thoughts in minds that throb for rest.

Child of the clouds, not long will thy pale form
Recline unsullied on the darkling ground ;
Soon wilt thou know earth's rendings and earth's
blight—

Thou that was fostered in the howling storm !
The sun will lift thee to his soilless round,
The open moon embrace thy soul at night.

SNOW IN APRIL

THINKST thou, because thy mission is to rear
On winter's edifice thy torch of light,
That thou art still so grateful to the sight
Now April with her shrinking buds is here?
Can we, who late have felt the springtide cheer,
Rejoice in this thy beauty that is blight;
And can we gaze upon thee with delight,
Thou fair reminder of a fruitless year?

Spirit of calm, thou lookst into my heart
In silence, and it throbs to answer thee.
No word of mine shall ever bid thee part,
For thou art always beautiful to me.
Perchance some time my dying soul will start
Through thy white arms into eternity.

PARTING

I TOOK the green wet grass in both my hands,
And kissed and kissed it, passionate, as though
'Twere the whole land I kissed; then turned away;
And the large view grew mystical with tears.

THE WANDERER

I WALKED the footing of a distant land;
The winds blew wild along the sand-hurled bars,
And the low voices of the weeping sea
Cried alien, alien, alien, to the stars.

HOMEcoming

YOUR home is not the same bright home
As when you saw it last;
The grass is stranger than the foam
And younger winds run past.
The street forgets it was once your friend,
And all the windows stare:
When sudden you see a sycamore bend
As it bent before, till you just pretend
That it *is* before, and your heart strings rend;—
And you laugh because you're there, thank God,
You laugh because you're there!

And She runs out of the open door,
You hold her to your breast.
She looks the same as she did before
But she's different like the rest.
You think of the things you meant to say
And then just talk instead;
When sudden she tries to draw away,

HOME COMING

Breathing quick as she did that day;
It's so much the same, you can only pray,
And bending touch her head, thank God,
And bending touch her head.

THE ALPINE LONGING

TELL me of the peaks of snow.
I have been so long away.
Tell me of the torrents' flow.

Heavy-hued the blossoms blow
In the dreary London day.
Tell me of the peaks of snow.

Toil and ease and toil; but oh,
Little leisure to be gay!
Tell me of the torrents' flow.

And the ruby Alpine glow;
In my dreams I watch it play.
Tell me of the peaks of snow.

Here the mist moves deadly slow
And the skies are always grey.
Tell me of the torrents' flow.

THE ALPINE LONGING

Soon, my countryman, I go
Where the tinkling cow-bells stray.
Tell me of the peaks of snow ;
Tell me of the torrents' flow.

A TRIBUTE

THY gentleness is wedded to such grace
That courtesy becomes a charmèd thing,
Natural as the bearing of a king.
Even that fitful weariness we trace
Through something in a smile. Upon thy face
Nobility, sweet wisdom and the care
Of little things are mirrored unaware,
As though the full soul could not give them place.

Thinking on thee is like remembering
The twilight by the lakeside, when the air
Scatters a rosy fragrance everywhere;
Caught in the leap of waters, as they fling
A music on the beach, where everything—
Lo, the first star!—is one in being fair.

TO A DECADENT POET

LORD of the brimming thoughts and burning brain,
Proud-hearted minstrel of resounding sin,
Can naught allay the ecstasy within?
Thine eager eyes wax lurid as they strain
Hellward, to view the beauty of her pain.
Thine alchemy draws music from her din.
Speak,—for thy dæmon wills it,—what hath been,
Crime, glory, death; for everything is vain.

Torches that flare like to the bosom heaves
Of sinful woman waiting to be won;
And hungry men with sateless eyes that stun
Resistance back, till Christ in heaven grieves:—
Yet never once the moon between the leaves
Nor winds that rush to meet the rising sun.

“THE LIPS ARE PRISON GATES”

THE lips are prison gates and keep the words—
So many words—from leaping into sound,
Sending them back unuttered to the soul.



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